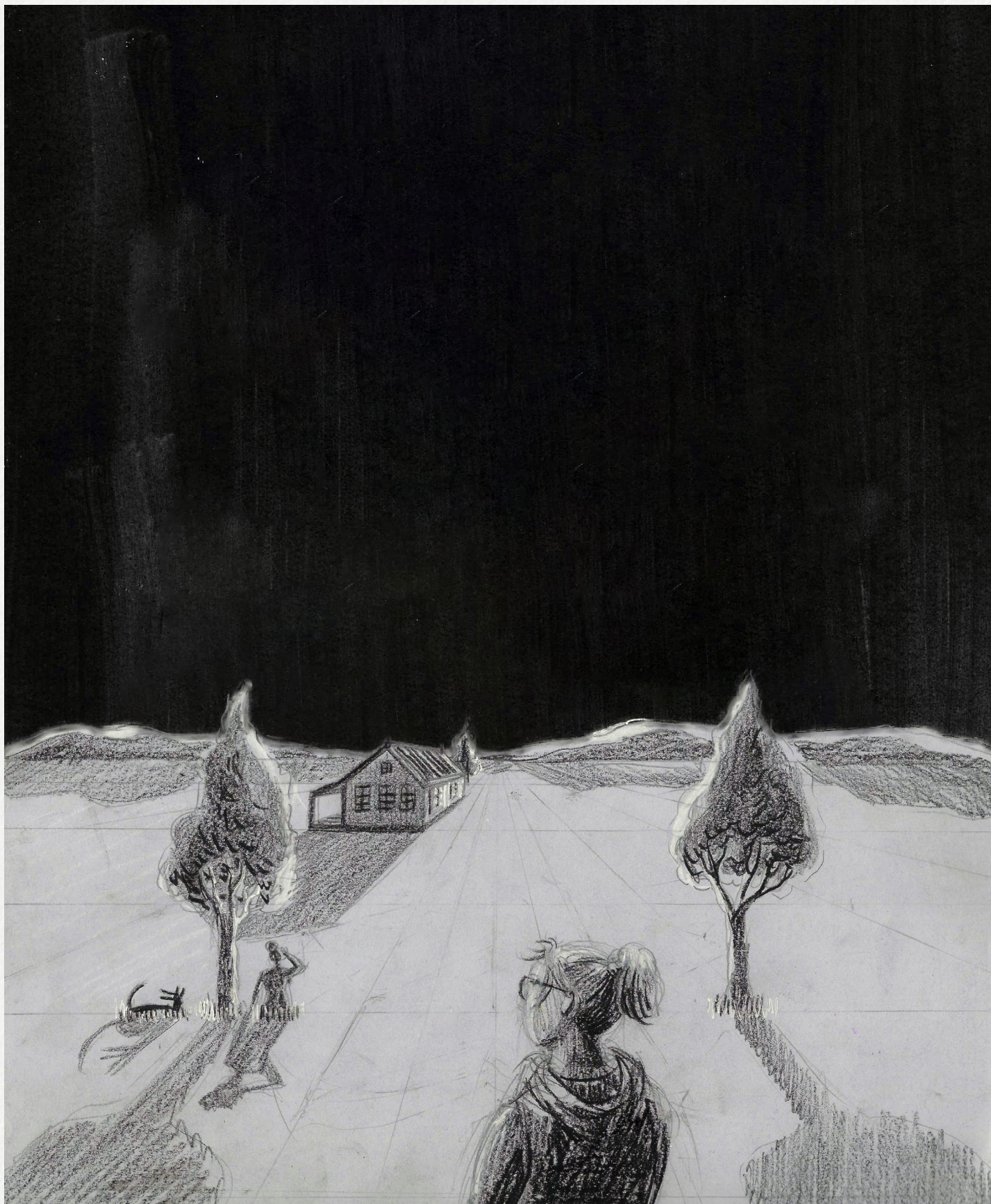


TAROT

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TAROT

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Introduction to this edition

I am delighted that this edition of *Tarot* is out in the world! The poems presented in this issue range in tone and style, and they represent a breadth of experience and interest, though it is interesting to note how many of them seem to share a shade of nostalgia. I have a few personal favourites in here that I am so glad you get the pleasure to read.

Today marks *Tarot*'s second birthday; over five issues, we have published ninety unique poets, two hundred and eighteen individual poems, and three hundred and twenty glorious pages. Each poem was selected because I resonated with it: because it explored an idea beautifully. Some poems are heartbreaking, some are hilarious, but every single poem takes a distinct truth and paints it on the page.

In particular, I am thrilled to present Ukrainian poet Vyacheslav Konoval's piece 'Dry tears' on the opposite page.

I invite you, as always, to engage with these poems in a number of ways: in isolation, and in conversation with each other. These poems are written by neighbours, but the view from each kitchen window can be radically diverse. May you find comfort as you enjoy your tea while gazing out familiar windows, and be challenged as you survey unrecognisable terrain out others. May these poems inspire you to see the world differently, to be in the world differently, and to write.

Kit Willett, Dec 2022

Featured poem:

Dry tears

Vyacheslav Konoval

In the September morning fog
caustic clouds of smoke steamed up,
from the exhaust pipes of family minivans,
cars stretched along the side of the road,
column, similar to a playful domestic snake.

The birds became silent, stunned,
a leper projectile flew in with lightning
remains smoldering in the abyss,
the devil cooks a proud cauldron.

The destinies of hundreds of people have been ruined,
life so forever broken,
took away the enemy's fluttering lives,
whose souls have gone to heaven.

Blood runs like ants through the body,
and saliva is not swallowed,
feet get cold, language is taken away.

Vyacheslav Konoval is a Ukrainian poet whose work is devoted to the most pressing social problems of our time, such as poverty, ecology, relations between the people and the government, and war. His poems have appeared widely.

cream

Amelia Kirkness

in my room when i was little i always wondered
what the colour of my walls would taste like.

i imagined white paint by the bucket
to be incomparably sweet. light and fresh,
like vanilla body mist coating your throat
with a pleasant, heady, breathless high.

to bathe in it, soft and unsticky.
the platonic ideal of a milkshake without the calories.
bright on the skin, covering, purifying,
the filling feeling of uniform goodness.
i could put my head under and drink forever
and be cleansed from inside out by the nectar

of things being all as they should be:
the devotion of a daughter
pure as a glass of milk,
full cream.

whipped butter on fluffy pancakes,
smooth as white roses, sharp as baby teeth—
the cottony peaks of a sunny day's clouds,
or a bowl of fresh merengue.
the whites of your eyes, spread wide in innocence,
the right look at the right time,
white like the crests of perfect crescent nails,
digging into skin.

calcite-bright, white chocolate-sweet,
gentle powdery icing sugar puffs
at the edge of the cake batter bowl.

i'd be strong enough not to lick the spoon.
soft soft soft and soft and pure and soft,

the froth atop a latte,
untainted, against and bettering the bitter parts,
and all the dark coffee of the world,
everything melting on the tongue.
smooth and liquid, consuming,
dripping down down down.
this is your duty:

you must flow and flow and never spill.
the realisation comes with a sour taste,
lactic and curdled like a bottle forgotten
at the bottom of the fridge:
you will never be pure enough.
the walls are only ever ivory.

resene's *quarter thorndon cream*,
just off-white.

This Way to a Uroabdomen

Sarah Lamar

Last night I stole my mum's keys and went for a drive
like I was 15 again, not 28,
visiting from a faraway country,
and at my wit's end.

It's summer and the sun sets late.
I'd never driven further west down her road
than three kilometres,
so I set off, chasing the sunset.

Bats flapped frantically overhead
darting between the heavily wooded road edges.
The gnats hung thick in the heavy air and
it was a feast.
A barred owl silently glided across my periphery
as the automatic headlights flicked on.

The road ended further on,
and I could tell the sun was dipping below the horizon,
hidden from view by a heavy patch of inky blue-green trees.

I turned north at the road end and
rolled the windows down.
The concrete undulated lazily past sparse, dark houses and
streams splitting the pine forest.

Out here, the streets have markers
for where you will end up, eventually,
if you take them.

If you take this left,
you'll end up where you started.

This right,
face-to-face with all the problems you're running from.

The next left,
salivating over a tray of lemon bars
your ex used to beg you to make.

The next right,
eyes the colour of blue agapanthus
napping on your chest
while *The X-Files* plays quietly in the background.
You need to pee, but in that moment you'd rather die
than stop combing your fingers through his curls.

Three roads up to the left,
you're in the ER for a ruptured bladder.

Eventually that road ended, too,
and I executed a strategic four-point turn
to go back the way I came.

I felt better knowing what's out there:
it makes this visit feel more real.

If someone asks me how it was
I could tell them about the bats,
and the owl,
and the road sign indicating the way to my urine-soaked death.

The jerseys

Tony Beyer

one mum each week
washed the team's jerseys
but your shorts and socks
were your own concern

the player whose turn it was
took home in a canvas kitbag
the muddy tangle
collected from the shed

to be returned next Saturday
for distribution by the coach by number
always clean and dry and neatly folded
the bag clean and dry too

with fifteen men and reserves
it took longer than a season
to come round again
the weekday transformation

of the crumpled residue
of rucks and scrums and lineouts
tackling or diving over for a try
so when they ran out

along the halfway line before kick-off
forwards and halves
and midfield and outside backs
they did everyone proud

Dress code for radio

Tony Beyer

the Concert Programme in its heyday
stipulated suits for the men
twinset and skirt or a frock
for everyone else

the timbre of an old school tie
could be discerned on air
and received pronunciation
eliminated the local

you would be excused for assuming
there were no natives or sheep
and the calendar of the seasons
hung upside down

broadcasts to students allowed
scant leeway for topical sounds
(daytime listeners pounced on the phone
or resorted to the mail)

a diminutive audience
more stubborn by the year
dissolving like a lozenge
in the nation's throat

Breath

Kathryn Marr

This house breathes.
I hear it
In the depths of night
Gentle and even like a heartbeat.
After the rain
I go outside
And smell her breath
Sweet and strong to remind me
Of those who have come before.
Sometimes I think she might swallow me up.
She looks scarred and hungry
And then she falls silent for days
And I fear she might have slipped away
But no.
She is here.
She reaches out to me
In the fleeting moments
On a Tuesday afternoon
When the sun washes the surface
Of the world
And warms the insides of my eyelids
And lifts me up like a child.
She is breathing even now.

8 on its side

Marie C Lecrivain

unadorned spinster
a fog gathers inside
her cat is hungry

in bed a man weeps
trapped by newsprint sirens
a tangle of inky limbs

boy on a swing
watches other children play
the distance widens

a couple entwined
she gasps, tightens, fulfilled
he sighs, emptied

old woman & phone
silent companions
no calls for days

father & son debate
rough voices parry & thrust
the stag laid low

city of light
the dark-souled denizens
cleave to shadows

8 on its side
constant rings tarnished
crushed underfoot

The Downsizing: Year 3

Mary Cresswell

“There’s some funny winds out there,”
said the boatman, scratching his neck.

The first easterly (ever) roared down,
laying unprepared trees on their backs.

Deep contour troughs of rain collected
like overhead ponds and then dumped

gallons too thick to see through, too thin
to handle hydro dams in the south.

Grey-green children howled at the door
dripping with things that used to matter

yelling for more, and more, and more
while the rivers ran upside down.

When I Speak

Joanne Tasker

I talk in a whisper
you speak in a shout
the voice rumbles in the back of your throat
and spills out of your mouth

I talk so quiet that it is barely a breath
sometimes even I forget that I used to speak loud
my throat a roaring furnace spitting out warmth
but the sound didn’t just burn out

It was smothered to embers
voice snatched from its pit
denied its chance to warm the room
swallowed up inside of voices like you

Dr. David Bowie

Hebe Kearney

while my grandmother was dying
i ran a tumblr blog dedicated to David Bowie,
posted GIFs of the sparkling man
and poured over his lyrics and looks
with a gaggle of international teenagers.

grandma took her time, in ICU,
being subjected to
every test and tube
from intra-aortic balloon pump to colonoscopy.
they let her go finally,
i think, out of mercy.

while her guppy breath faltered
my parents got drunk
and yelled until my family estranged them,
getting away from toxicity,
and left me.

on tumblr,
dreaming about a man
who could have been granddad,
i sought solace in a cosmic world
of sequins and spandex,
injected my pain into his voice,
clinging to sanity.

so you can imagine how i felt
when a new, ICU doctor
introduced himself to us one day
and his name badge read, honestly,
'Dr. David Bowie'.

From My Front Yard

Lorraine Gibson

I'd watch old Tom collect his mail.
His wilting apprehensive legs
crabbing slowly down
then up the hilltop drive,
each step of his
a breath of mine.
From time to time
he'd stop and gaze
transfixed—perhaps at life gone by.
The old wax-flower
no longer visited by bees,
the waning passionfruit
no longer sweet or
tart upon his tongue.
And when he paused
beside his shrunken shrubs
and dying lawn, I wondered,
did he see his life,
his long dead wife,
or very busy children there,
or did Tom simply stop
to catch his breath
as he made me
catch mine.

Last Time

Conor Doherty

There's a last time for everything.

Watching the clock count down
To New Year's,
Surrounded by all your friends in varying states of sobriety;
The only time you can remember recently
Where you've been looking forward to time passing,
Egging it on to go faster and faster.
Shouting 3, 2, 1,
And hugging with such ferocity that only alcohol produces,
Or kissing if you're lucky.
Desperately trying to preserve the moment,
As being here, on this spinning rock,
With the people who matter as you welcome a new era.
Watching the sun come up on a bright January morning.
There's a last time for everything.

Sitting in your car boot with your nearest and dearest,
Drinking the cheapest alcohol you could find
As the sun goes down in a blaze
Of pinks and fiery orange.
Swatting at the sandflies and recounting
How you met, all the times you laughed until you cried,
All the times you held each other's hair over the toilet,
All the times you knew what you had was good.
Thinking about where you're all going next,
Laying your head on her shoulder,
Shedding a few tears onto the sand.
Waking up desperately hungover and tired,
But with a sense that you finally know where you stand in the world.
There's a last time for everything.

Going to say goodnight to your parents
For the last time in your own home.
Finding them sitting a little misty-eyed, with a space
Left for you,
Just like there always used to be.
Climbing under the covers with them,
And watching whatever shitty sitcom is on the TV.
The whole family together, cat and all,
Well aware of the significance of the moment.
Leaving because you can't take it anymore,
And they follow you downstairs,
And tuck you into bed and turn off the lights.
There's a last time for everything.

Oh, isn't there always.
Signing each other's white shirts on the last day of school.
Shaking the headmaster's hand at graduation.
Standing in the dawn with the white caps breaking and a friend at your side.
Oh yes, there's a last time for it all.
There's a last time for everything.

merlin x arthur

Hebe Kearney

merlin and arthur from the 2008 tv show *merlin* are so in love
but it's not *gay*.

they're just two bros who keep trying to die for each other;
arthur throwing his nimble body onto swords,
merlin trailing him into danger's mouth, being almost swallowed
by battle and spell and creature.

it's only longing glances and hot tears
while the other lies pallid and poisoned
until he comes round again (inevitably) by magic and hugs are had
but not *gay* hugs
just manly-male-friendly-friendship-platonic-pal hugs
and most of the time, it's just a clap on the back anyway.

ignore the moony gazes and horseplay and how
they love / hate each other's foolishness
like a young couple in love—no! sorry,
in *friendship*.
but not even that, they're just master / servant after all.

see? it can't be *gay* the way
arthur, lost puppy, seems unable to go anywhere
without his merlin to ear-whisper,
leading him to the right / wrong decision
with unwavering faith in camelot's golden future.

it's not *gay*—they have women, after all!
arthur is married to the serving girl he loved in secret,
and merlin had that one romance in a tunnel
with a winged cat / girl / lady of the lake (now dead).

so, no, it can't be *gay*
it happened way before that was even a concept!
no one had ever heard of *gay* all the way back
in 2008.

Query

Mary Cresswell

My ideas scull the thermals
they come back to settle by my feet

The ginger cat wafts like seed-pod fluff
cruising the margins of his drift

Books line shelves, words line books
coffee cups line the kitchen sink

When power lines end in infinity
how should we ask where they start?

Pace

D.C. Nobes

I stand on the balcony
and glance across
scattered lights in
scattered homes.

Here and there
people have late dinners,
watch TV,
play games,
make love,
make war.

Street lights shine back
from drizzle drenched streets.
Few cars, fewer people
walk the paths
away from where they have come
towards some destination.

We all have some destination.

Eventually, it's all the same.

But tonight I watch the city lights
reflect from low clouds,
and listen to the music.
Don't you hear it?
Ah, you're not listening then,
if you can't.
And if you can't,
there's no explaining.

Prelude

Jackson McCarthy

The night is so few hours
then you sleep—
slipped under sheets,

against windows
as water.

And all those footpaths
between our houses
stretching into the dark—

And all this time we wasted
blaming the body.

Almost Transparent Blue

Kathryn Marr

How still I am as I watch this sky.
This sky,
With all its moods and sharp edges,
Almost transparent blue to my right
But to my left,
Raging.
I quiet my breath
As layers scrape silently beneath layers
Now spreading out, now surrendering
Before dissolving into the yellow-white light.
The wisteria sighs
The peak of the old shed roof
Is solid and safe
Like hands clasped in prayer.
The wind cuts chasms in this sky
And then shakes her head, smiles
And whips their edges like cream.
I smile too
Even though I cannot lift my head.

Ultrasound

Marie C Lecrivain

today
the cup & the wand intersect
to sry for answers
to my future

an image coalesces
to reveal the empty chamber
of my womb
bleak, cool, lifeless
its smooth barren walls
are unappealing

& I can discern
the left ovum
slowly extend its tendrils
to release a viable
who does not stay
but chooses to quietly expire;
a kinder alternative
than spending 10 moons in
an oubliette
that cannot hold love or kindness

I have seen
my future echoed
in miniature;
the futile journey
of an imaginable life
passing
into night

Small bibasilar atelectasis (Taranaki)

Trevor M Landers

The unmistakable whiff
of state-sponsored asepsis
and a corridor of laboured,
breathy inhalations wheezed
the desaturations of privilege
a sojourn: short-stay surgical
M18 at Waikato Hospital
Short words in each pause,
and I am only listening with
half of my heart, the words
breathed in forming my ribs
bend my spine, let fingers
intertwine, the oxygen spills
from skin to skin and even
my hands are having trouble
breathing you in; giddy with
desire for oxygen and you.
My love is a hospital; a fair
asylum for asthmatic lovers
& dreamers of every hue, a
great leviathan around you,
a skilful uncouth prison of an
embrace coming out at me
without necessity or
habitual
ennui.

A Saga of Silence

Padmaja Battani

Moments of silence flow
Into hours, days, months, and years

Sometimes I am muted involuntarily
Sometimes my words are

Transformed into tranquility willingly
Sometimes my yearning to shout out

Dies on a deaf heart
Sometimes I am not sure

Whether I deserve to talk
Most of times my words form

Wings and fly away to distant lands
And yet

No one ever recognizes my silence
None persuades for my words

Waitakaruru Arboretum

Ceridwyn Parr

If you stand for long enough
on the edge of this cliff
and listen with all your heart,
you may hear a cello playing.

The sides of this granite quarry
were once scraped bare of gravel
for Waikato roads, leaving a hollow
skeleton, abandoned for thirty years,

At the bottom of the brutal story
you can now see a ruffled lake,
where flax and cabbage trees sway
pianissimo in the westerly wind;

Swamp cypresses like half opened umbrellas,
protect the jetty, jutting,
mossy and wooden among the Monet
waterlilies, shallow-rooted in the tears
of the tangata whenua.

Could music creep from a greywacke pit
long filled with blackberry and gorse,
and dance out of these rocky hill-sides,
poco a poco crescendo?
In a silence, will the very stones cry out?

Rest here at the top of the rock face
beside the fragile fence; see below
the cellist in afternoon shade, there.
You may hear strains of Vivaldi's *Autumn*
from the pool of time. Just listen.

Walk on the wild side

Rebecca Jane Hare

Urgent intergenerational
Redress and preservation
Ruthlessness is blinding
Remove the bandages

Merciful atmosphere
Under blurry blue skies
Peering through the misty
Semipermeable brown

Crumbling fort walls in ruins
Foggy panes, heavy rain
Windows ajar for smashing
Ceiling made of glass

Sharpen your darts
Destination is your weapon
Take aim to remedy
Through camera lens befriend

Flaky armchair oaths
Conceal fading hopes
Triumphs self-taught
Tightrope taut, time to walk

Hiding behind complacency
The decency of tasks
Gives momentum
To masked up languishing

The beach is calling
Blasting sand, raging high tide

Walk on the wild side
Counter culture seeping

A seaweed hat
Disguises the weeping

Song for Kate Bush (Song for Giacomo)

Erin Ramsay

Star: I saw you
In the cool dark of kind December
I hid tears in night's gift and lived again

You would remember me
Hallowed in Northcote by the Georgian hymn
In the two-dollar store's neon aisles

You—are the rush of thunder and the tempest
And your morning fog wakes the borrowed day with dew
You are the cèilidh of our city's broken rain

You are the glitter around Tara's harbour
Eyes soft in the sea-swell, refusing to die
—*Sono un uomo*, so they might *take me for a buoy*

You are the light on the ridgeline, the call between father and son
He sits in the foyer and I can hear him speaking
—*Non mollare, hai degli amici*

You are the fall of water to fern and the hand that holds me
Pulling me down from the hill to Kelburn ground
They are all around me: I love and find life in their bright and past-looking eyes

Souls search

Rebecca Jane Hare

Long ago you burned
Their children in church
Locked behind heavy
Wooden doors. Blinded
By what you interpreted
As warfare orders.

Their fight was not lost
In surrender you told
Aching hearts and minds
Float unfound above ground
In your nightmares
And in your daughter's.

Married forever
To a soldier's cause
See-through used gauze
After the jam is pressed
Sticky ethical fibre
Of translucent left behind

Essence of the extracted.
Grow lavender halos
Of higher purpose
As you toss and prowl
Behind the picket fences
Of your stolen homes.

Unmarked graves
Play forever in your mind
In every immortal
Apricot morning
You see their searching
Non-combatant silhouettes.

Ukrainian Fertility Song

Trevor M Landers

For Nika

Sometimes my husband
holds my lower stomach
in his manly hands
when he sleeps
his whole arms around me
heaving and kneading
and I confess at that moment
plump with our child
none could be happier
that sacred seed
growing inside me.

The Severance

Joel Schueler

The severance is conspiring
with the furrowed horizontals
in desiring to halve a face anew.
The antichrists are desperate
in their proclivity for fissure.
Seek, they might, a sidling
of the theatrical truth
or a sidling of the truth that's just downright taciturn.
Sense may still yet come
devouring the memories inside
the corpse.
Perching is a lust
for societal polarity
or a lust for the sacral recipes of disease
or a lust for furthering the war in Ukraine.
The severance can only do so much,
such is the omnipresent union of nihilism.

The Wanderer

Hannah Ogle

Peace is hard-earnt, never fully formed in the mind
But your search is ongoing, pride in yourself, not just the sky
You're the northern-most point to a community pillar;
For the very absence of perfumed cloth, holier than all of his kind

The net you cast returns more than you think to steal
Wild seas judge you worthy, for in turn for others, you only feel
No complacency can build when you move through the night
And when hunger is experienced, only then does it become real

Lessons are preached, not learned; and it resonates not at all like this
There's bravery to sacrificing what you both covet and miss
I think of you sometimes, when the stars speak their hymns
What they pretend at in public, in the heart, I think, in truth—it is his

Letters stand in utter defiance to spelling-book rules

Mark Young

The lost chatter of men, the
exteriority of written &
figurative elements—very
few persons write a good
letter. In this split & drifting

space, strange bonds are knit.
Two garrulous mutes use
elegant language, yet use it
easily. A word can take the
place of an object if the paren-

thesis is avoided. Neatness is
important. The measure of
the “iron horse” is how many
missives it drags behind. No
mass, no name, form without

volume. Word & object are
deployed in two different
dimensions. Emptiness undoes
the space. Verbal lightning
flashes come naturally to a child.

Sources:

This Is Not a Pipe, by Michel Foucault
The Ladies' Book of Etiquette (1860), by Florence Hartley

Something More

Lee Jane Taylor

Poetry is words and something more
recurring couplets, rhythm and rhyme
poetry is free
verse meaning shaping form
leaves space
for the exquisite jarring of this jar stuffed
with thought it empties softly
as it rushes full
the music of speech beautiful
or unkind artistry of the literate lobes
of minds my cat stalks the line
of bannisters ten feet high tail
kissing sky poetry in motion
emotion and notion combine
images dull or brilliant of love
shame, glee, disassociation
a curling leaf, brown devours green
the surgeons blade and eye gleam
in synchronicity death sex
feeding meaning identity breathing
poetry is your heart beat steady
under my right ear, sureness
of a warm chest beneath my nebulous
stare - clouds wandering
wonder where does weather begin
where do hills end, do they look back
poetry is the maths of cats
lap plus blanket equals nap
bowl plus cupboard-squeak equals snack
the profane, the profound

play together games absurd
poetry it is words, imagining, form
and something more.

Acclimatisation

Tony Beyer

early in my time here
in my late fifties

I was at the bottom of Maratahu St
when the sun dimmed

and another rain squall combed the grass
and shook rooftops and tree canopies

and a woman of about my age
on the opposite side of the road

hood over short-cropped grey hair
hands deep in a blue parka's pockets

sang out in a friendly voice
bloody Taranaki weather

Thin Red Perigee over Whaler's Gate

Trevor M Landers

*I will wade out
till my thighs are steeped in burning flowers
I will take the sun in my mouth
and leap into the ripe air
—Crepuscle, e.e. cummings*

She declares, determinedly
she won't be seduced by the hype
remembering that time we
went out late
the evening languid in the cold autumn air
in search of a blood orange moon
up on Churchill Heights
and what a disappointment that was
without binoculars and strawberries
simply an orange smudge
this one
a waxing crescent phase
the penumbral eclipse
embracing the moon-rise lunar eclipsing
beaming silver luminous orb
lust with closed eyes
dashed against inks of darkness
the sleeping curves of your body
a lunar mystery of the flesh
gorgeous salute to the firmed thighs
lubricious draperies of snatched lunar minutes
all over Whaler's Gate
that beaming cyclops rising ever higher
I signed my name, Trevor M Landers
in a dissolving sky.

She Fell Away

Tim Jones

She fell away from the war,
from building Rolls Royce engines,

from the bank and its simultaneous
wedding basket and farewell.

From the shower head and the shower walls
she fell away.

She fell away from the atrium,
from the ventricles, from blood and breath and pulse.

She fell away from the post-war migration,
from miles never re-crossed

for fear she could not make herself return.
From streets as wide as years, she fell away.

She fell away from her daughter and her son.
From rotary phones and Rogernomics,

from Princess Diana and the Berlin Wall,
from crumbling certainties, she fell away.

She fell away from the ceiling,
from the yellow, unflattering light,

from the hospital that held her last two weeks.
From doctors and from nurses, she fell away.

From the casket and her husband,
from a house as cold as comfort,

from the mumbling of the preacher,
from the shuffling of her mourners,

she fell away to ash and memory.
Through the ragged net of words,

down the telescope of years,
she fell away.

Dreams know no dying

Padmaja Battani

Every night I kill my dreams
Strangle all aspirations
Convince my heart that
I do not deserve them
Prepare to pick worldly ways

Every morning I wake up
To see saplings rising
From floundered dreams
Sprigs flourishing
From flogged hopes
Beaming and eager to bloom

Shades of Resilience

Padmaja Battani

Draping the pink saree
She looked into the mirror
Among the silk moulds of pink
She felt quite imperceptible

She chose a red saree first
Then mother said
'It's too flashy, let's
Go for a pink one'

That night she drew a troop of girls
Dancing under moonlit sky
All in bright coloured robes

The red and orange hues
Shimmering on their dark faces
Their smiles contending moonshine

hardtack

Hebe Kearney

after the te papa gallipoli exhibit
my weak teeth crack
on an iron-hard biscuit
of pain about the ANZACs.

snap-toothed, the exposed root
throbs dully
and i swallow
the broken chip
along with desiccated coconut.

i begin to choke
on blond crumbs
spluttering, mouth coated in a butter film
tasting like rancid patriotism.

the lump in my throat
feels like the knowledge:
we didn't need to be there.

bravery, sacrifice, etc.
but for what?
we were invading them
and it was a rugged bloodbath in hot dirt.

finally peristalsis moves the bolus
of tooth and biscuit further down my digestive tract
where it falls like a heavy bullet
into the pit of my stomach.

i don't know if the acid down there
is strong enough to digest it.

Intimacy

Joanne Tasker

Before him sex was a release
a charade of intimacy
a means to an end
stress killer
orgasm

my body moved like a child
assembling a science fair project
that goes there
this goes here
wait for the papier-mâché volcano to erupt
— *ejaculate*

my body moved like a teen
uncomfortable in their own skin
just be quiet
just be still
wait for the right moment to escape
— *oh, the walk of shame!*

but when he touched me
it was euphoric
to let go
to come undone
to become myself entirely.

compulso. hetero.

Hebe Kearney

i was 17 when you told me you drank bleach as a kid.
it ate up your insides and you were supine
in a hospital bed for ages, feeling
alien and special all at once.

you met me on a train, i put *you* first
because *you* tapped *me* on the shoulder, saying in australian:
you're pretty, wanna get coffee?
it was washing day and i still thought i was a girl,
didn't know what you saw
in a stained pink floyd t-shirt and frizzy hair
but said: *sure*.

later it became dark and we got those
good old no. 1 pancakes (r.i.p.)
and sat up in the gnarled fingers of an albert park tree
where you looked down on me
for not believing in ghosts.

my beaten dr martens got drenched
the rainy night we walked and you said
you were an expert at climbing buildings,
but wouldn't demonstrate.

you worked at new world stocking shelves,
i'd come share your lunch breaks
and be impressed by your latest tattoo —
you wanted to kiss me
but i never let you.

once you realised our hand-holding
wasn't going anywhere,
it didn't take long for you to ghost me

you went back to australia, eventually
and took your spectral expectations
of: *then what?* ;)

so i guess i have you to thank, then,
for teaching me
i'm just not that into men.

Goddess of Eternity

Joanne Tasker

Her hair blows like streamers in the cold night air
streetlight gold setting fire to her unbound curtain of hair
that covers her face like a veil.

She has a champagne heart and cigarette soul
that she doesn't share, she stands alone.

She smirks across deep red lips
lipstick stains like blood on her teeth.

She will devour any man that steps too close
and spit out their bones in the gutter of the street.
Her fingertips are black with ink
from reaching into the sky and smearing the night around.
She is Goddess of Eternity.

And still, a man approaches from across the street
thinks her mortal
sees her shapely waist not her sharpened teeth
sees her shoulders bare against the wind
not the pitch-black sky spilling from her eyes.
He says, "Are you alright?
Do you need a ride? It isn't safe out here at night."
He's right.

Five a.m. when dark gives way to morning light
a woman finds the body
glittering faintly with starlight.
Blinks.
There's blood on his lips.
Fingernail scratches along the chest
heart ripped from between the ribs
and taken as a keepsake

a reminder that it is dangerous out here
at night.

& tears

Amelia Kirkness

when i got home from year 13 formal
there were specks of blood
on the nude tulle of my dress
from the lacerations on my arms
made by its sequins
as i danced.

at least my feet didn't really hurt this time,
not like the last year, all the blisters
and the aching the next day
from my insistence on wearing
the white strappy shoes until the night was done.
i didn't regret it, not while

remembering the year 8 leavers dance,
icing my feet in the bathtub at 11 pm
after my first time in Proper Heels,
with legs red and irritated,
shaved raw to look pretty under the dress.

at the end of the day,
what's more classically girly than this?
what's more feminine than blood and tears?
pencil sharpener blades to 12-year-old wrists
too chubby for the lead in the play?
the eager anticipation of being old enough
to wear makeup, to compensate,
after watching beauty gurus
from age 8?

and then there's all the years
of high school, waking up

at 5 am or some other ungodly hour
for skincare and makeup, with extra time
to redo the eyebrows
four times before I'd leave the house
when they never looked right,
and concealer to hide the sleep deprivation.
Cassie-from-Euphoria-core, before it was cool.

all of this, the ways through which i define myself,
carving out my space in the world with every ache.
my right to be a girl marked out by the fact that,
even if i was not born pretty,
i can always suffer the pain it takes

and when it makes me cry
i can tilt my head at just the right angle
and swipe the tears away quick,
before they drip too far,
so as to not fuck up my mascara.

Miss Q

Rebecca Jane Hare

Hail the humble (we'll call her Miss Q)
The quiet one in meetings
Breathing silent spatial relations
In her unspoken mind
Like wool passed many times
Underneath the table

Miss Q doesn't need glasses
In corridors and boardrooms
Like a detective, she sees beyond
Through transparent screens and skins
Two-faced smiles, folded arms
And the rubbing of hands

Miss Q reads cues
Through thinly guised veils
Of obnoxious self-importance
Ego tussles and torn reputations
Where a battlefield undercurrent burns
But no one yells, "Fire in the hole!"

Miss cal-Q-lates the risks
Aspiring chiefs speak over her white flag
Correct her in front of peers
According to their own preferences
They do not ask for her opinion
Gather buy-in, or guarantees

Miss Q is discerning
Determining sweet from sour
The secret story to her success
She holds her tongue

And swallows only what is good for her
She has read all of the small print

Miss Q makes a memorable tamarind curry

Closer to the river

Tim Jones

Kettled. Sun
bursts the helicopter haze,
picks details from doorways:
flak jacket, hunk of hair.
We push, are pushed. Fear
sweats off in stale adrenalin.
Mirrored in visors, twin desires:
blood, oblivion. Shots burst
from the windows of an upper room.

Hiraeth

Erica Hoskin

What are words when meaning is deserted,
when there is ash where the ahi kā once burned?
Are lost to time the stories that once were the fuel,
or can they be saved from perdition?
What is a name without a pūrākau,
without knowledge of those who came before?
Are our tīpuna only passing shadows
or are they dancing in the land of youth?
How can we claim to be sympathetic
when we ignore the screaming of so many?
Can the Fomhóraigh sympathise with their victims,
when Balor's castle is built on their bones?
Is there an answer to be unearthed,
or shall we always wander in darkness?
Will we be able to live in rangimārie
or will chaos rule eternally
When will the wheel of fate stop spinning
when does the future break free of the past?
Can outlooks be woven together,
or will the raranga unwind?
Can a deoraí embrace his peinga,
When he sees another in his whare?
Will we be forever cast adrift
or will the hiraeth at last cease?

Bearing Fruit

Hollie Taylor

I carry the full moon in my womb
as I walk onto my own battlefield,

Mother says, Don't you know girls grow inside grenades?

I watched her crawl forth from the wreckage on hands and knees,
a daughter crawling head-first out of
the blasted hollow of her home.

Girlhood grows around cyanide
and daughters metamorphose into
their mothers; it sounds like the crack
of a whip against dry bone ready for
kindle.

I followed Mother into the pit of
exile as a fresh girl, sanguine and blameless.

I followed the white rabbit.

Mother's horror is a mirror
and I now own her trauma like
a trophy,

a haunted heirloom beating inside
like a second heart.

Get it out of me.

Reverse Genesis

Jackson McCarthy

We fell inverse back to Eden
and the angels put out their swords.
The apple came up in the toilet,
the snake was just a snake, the tell-
ing-off untold. And everything
we learned—No hunger, no music,
no star in no black eye. Or skin
on skin. Or skinlessness. It could
be easy to live like this. As
animals without purpose,
a beauty that asks no questions.
With rib retracted, dust settled,
we got real small; returned to clay.
(Soon the birds will drop from the day.)

Poet Biographies

Padmaja Battani, originally from India, lives in Connecticut. She received an MA in English Literature. Her work has appeared in *Sierra Poetry Festival*, *Trouvaille Review*, *The Temz Review*, *Coffee People Zine*, *Bitchin' Kitsch*, *Black Cat Magazine* and elsewhere. Her latest passion is hiking. She is currently working on a poetry collection.

Tony Beyer writes in Taranaki. His print titles include *Dream Boat: selected poems* (HeadworX) and *Anchor Stone* (Cold Hub Press).

Mary Cresswell happily switched to poetry after a very long science editing career that started with the *Apollo Project* and ended with the *Kakapo Recovery Project*. Recent books: 'Fish Stories: Ghazals and glosas' (Canterbury University Press) and 'Body Politic: Nature poems for nature in crisis' (The Cuba Press). Also see: www.read-nz.org/writer/cresswell-mary/

Conor Doherty is a queer Pākehā student living on Ngāti Whātua land in Tāmaki Makaurau. The first thing they remember writing was a story about a murderous science teacher, and now somehow they're here. They also won Highly Commended in the Poetry Aotearoa Secondary School Competition.

Lorraine Gibson is a Scottish-Australian writer, poet and painter. Her poetry is published in literary journals, magazines and anthologies including: *Meniscus Literary Journal*, *The Galway Review*, *Eureka Street*, *Booranga fourW*, *Poetry for the Planet*, *Live Encounters*, *Hecate*, *Backstory* and *Burrow*.

Rebecca Jane Hare was born in Tauranga Moana and now lives in Tāmaki Makaurau. A former teacher, Rebecca furthered her career writing for newspapers, both in print and online, publishing educational resources and developing programmes in the professional learning sphere. History, good humans, words and concepts, and ocean swimming, make her heart sing.

Erica Hoskin (they/them) is a non-binary writer born and raised in Taranaki. They currently live in Wellington and write poetry focused on culture and the human psyche, taking inspiration from Māori and Celtic culture which both have a significant impact on their life and world view.

Tim Jones lives in Te Whanganui-a-tara / Wellington. He has published one novel, one novella, two short story collections and five poetry collections. His latest book is climate fiction novella *Where We Land* (The Cuba Press, 2019). In 2022, he has new poetry in *Landfall*, *takahē*, *broadsheet* and *a fine line*.

Hebe Kearney (they/them) is a poet who lives in Tāmaki Makaurau. Their work has appeared in publications including: *Mantissa Poetry Review*, *Mayhem*, *Starling*, *samfiftyfour*, *takahē*, and *Poetry New Zealand Yearbooks*. You can find them at @he__be on Instagram.

Amelia Kirkness is an Ōtautahi-born, Pōneke-based poet, winged eyeliner aficionado, and student of English Literature and Media Studies at Victoria University. Her writing has been published in various places including *Catalyst*, *Starling*, and *a fine line*. Outside of writing, she enjoys curating her 7000-song Spotify library into increasingly niche playlists.

Sarah Lamar is a quantitative ecologist, runner, creative, and eternal optimist living in Wellington / Te Whanganui-a-Tara. She spends her free time falling in love, curating niche music playlists, and trying to pay attention to the world around her. Sarah has previously published creative writing works under a pseudonym, but has started to blend her creative and "other" lives together.

Trevor M. Landers is the editor of the regional bilingual literary journal, *Matatuhi Taranaki*. He holds a Masters of Creative Writing (with Distinction) from AUT. His latest project is *Ngā Pūrehu Kapohau: A Literary Homage to Pātea, Waverley and Waitōtara*, which he is editing with Dr. Vaughan Rapatahana. He is a psychotherapist and lives in Ngamotu/New Plymouth.

Marie C Lecrivain is an author, photographer, and curator of Dashboard Horus. Her work's appeared in *Chiron Review*, *Nonbinary Review*, *Orbis*, and other journals. She's the editor of *Ashes to Stardust: A David Bowie Tribute Anthology* (forthcoming, 2022 Sybaritic Press).

Kathryn Marr is a Christchurch-based lecturer and holds an MA in Japanese from the University of Canterbury. Returning to her native New Zealand four years ago after sixteen years spent living in Japan, she uses poetry as a vehicle to explore themes including identity, culture, loss and belonging.

Jackson McCarthy is a poet and student from Tāmaki Makaurau. He was a finalist for the Schools Poetry Award 2021. His work has been published in *Starling*, *Landfall*, and elsewhere.

D.C. Nobes is a scientist who spent the first half of his life in or near Toronto, Canada, then 23 years based in Christchurch, New Zealand, 4 years in China, and has now retired to Bali. He has been writing since primary school.

Hannah Ogle is a 32 year old single woman living in Hawkes Bay. Her life is all about my family and animals, and occasionally writing.

Ceridwyn Parr lives and writes in Cambridge, where she loves words, ideas, music, cafes and e-biking.

Erin Ramsay is a poet ambiguously located. This year they are undertaking a Masters in History at Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington. Their second-favourite book is *To the Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf.

Joel Schueler's works appear in over ten countries in over sixty publications including *California Quarterly*. *Poetry for Mr Gould* (Cyberwit, 2021) is his first book of poetry. <https://www.joelschueler.com>

Joanne Tasker studied law at the University of Waikato. She began writing poetry in 2018 after making a spontaneous decision to take a poetry class during her last year of University. She has since been published in *Fast Fibres*, *Mayhem* and *Tarot*.

Hollie Taylor is a 25-year-old writer based in Christchurch. Her works are inspired by full-bodied emotions and deep-rooted topics such as, mental health and trauma, generational grief and femininity, in addition to love and desire and fear. Some of these works are woven with gothic undertones and mythos.

Lee Jane Taylor is a poet, mother of three, and clinical psychologist, in Otautahi. Themes in her writing include illness/wellness, imagination/memory and nature/domesticity. Currently, she is at home most days nursing a chronic inflammatory illness—but she is working on that!

Mark Young was born in Hokitika and now lives in a small town in North Queensland. He is the author of over sixty books, primarily text poetry but also including speculative fiction, vispo & art history. His most recent book is *Songs to Come for the Salamander, Poems 2013-2021*, selected & introduced by Thomas Fink, co-published by Meritage Press & Sandy Press.

